THE TINTING OF PHOTOGRAPHS

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LESSON FIFTEEN

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Remember that old photograph on glass? Remember that portrait of your grandmother as a child, all dressed up in a hoop skirt and lace bonnet, that you dug up from the dusty old chest in the garret, so full of bits of chiffon and lace, mystery and romance? This faithful old portrait is known as a Daguerreotype and is the invention of a Frenchman, Daguerre. At his death, new developments took place and scientists and inventors worked on new discoveries. The camera and kodak of today are but the outcome of their labor.

Among the scientists who devoted their lives to photographic researches, I might name Lumiere, a Frenchman, inventor of the cinematograph, the pioneer of the moving picture of today. Foremost among his discoveries stands photography in natural colors, which marks an epoch in this art. But as great as the invention of Lumiere is, he only succeeded in making the impression of four colors, yellow, red, green and purple.

It was left for the chemists the world over to solve the naturalistic coloring of photographs through chemical dyes applied directly to print. They knew that photography needed a new incentive. They succeeded in discovering chemical dyes but in their zeal to obtain their object they made the coloring of prints an achievement that took artistic ability and made it out of reach of the layman. No longer are people spellbound by a flat gray or brown print.

Simpler means were devised and the easily applied colors of today and their readily blending qualities have made the tinting of photographs a new industry that is acclaimed by the most critical.

I might mention Wallace Nutting, an American, who has made the tinting of photographs his life-work. A close inspection of his work will reveal a masterly handling of his mediums. He has relied on the softness and modesty of his coloring to make his work a refined and tasteful product. In many instances, his prints have the appearance of finely rendered water colors. There is not an art store or a novelty store that does not carry tinted pictures of Nutting. He has made thousands of them and his latest work, as his first, shows the same softness and freshness of tone. He has many imitators who are very successful in this clean, fascinating and profitable work.

The Tinting of Photographs (Process)

The most beautiful effects can be produced by tinting photographs. Some of nature's most delicate colors may be recorded through the right tinting and blending of colors.

It is advisable to dilute the different colors, and to use them very sparingly. A very light tone may be gone over and thus made darker. Never use the pure color unless a very strong tone or shade is desired.

Rightly tinted prints owe their pretty appearance to their softness. Harsh, crude tones must be avoided. An under-tinted print is very much more attractive than one too highly colored. The first one shows care and taste, the latter carelessness and lack of taste. Your prints must show the delicacies of hand work and not the mechanical and crude appearance to be found in the cheaply printed card.

With a little care at the start and a fair knowledge of the strength of your medium. you will experience no difficulty in obtaining good results.

Assuming our subject is a landscape, we will proceed with the tinting of the sky by

applying a shade of blue starting at the upper edge, and blending into light green or light purple as the horizon line is reached. This will give depth to our picture. The last wash will be carried lightly on to the trees in the distance, but very lightly. All excess of color will be removed with a blotter.

If a sunset effect is desired a wash of scarlet blending into tones of light scarlet and yellow may be applied, starting from the sky-line.

The trees in the distance will be tinted in light purple, providing these trees are far enough in the distance to grant this treatment. The trees in the middle distance will be tinted in light green, and those in the foreground will be washed in dark green and shaded in purple. The trunks and twigs will be tinted in a light, VanDyke brown, diminishing in intensity as the trees in the picture recede from the foreground. The grass will be washed in yellowish green for the distance, blending into light green in the middle distance, and a dark green toward the front of the picture. This again will give a feeling of depth.

In the case of trees in the foreground silhouetted against the sky, green tones and a shading of brown and purple will give them a naturalistic effect.

I have taken this example of a landscape as one that is most commonly pictured.

There are thousands of outdoor pictures which may be taken and to which these fundamental principles may be applied. To go into details and discuss the different subjects that form the composition in a picture would require too lengthy a treatise. I shall leave these details to the imagination and the judgment of the student.

For snow scenes the sky will be washed in first, as in the landscape scene, but the tints used will be slightly different. I obtain good results by applying a wash of blue at the top of the print, lessening in intensity as the horizon is reached. Allowing it to partly dry, I apply following this first wash, a tone of light purple all over the surface of the sky, thus giving a wintry appearance to the sky, due to the cool tones produced by this coating of light purple.

The local color of the trees and objects on the picture should be recorded in light tones and shades, and a light purple used for their shading.

It will be found that a light tone will seem much darker than at first supposed, due to the fact that the white snow forms a brilliant contrast and also a double reflection; the reflection of the sky and the reflection formed by the snow.

In the case of interior pictures, we will first match the coloring of the wall and record it in our print. We will also match the different articles in the room to color. For deep shadows we will use purple.

For portraits we shall use a very light wash of pink and yellow mixed for the flesh. We will touch up the cheeks and eyelids with a small amount of very light pink. The hair should look as natural as possible. I will caution the student against using too strong a color, and will advise him to try it on a piece of scrap paper until he is convinced that he has a light enough tint to start on the final proof. A light purple should be used for shading.

To obtain the different tones mix as follows:

For Flesh.....Light Pink and Yellow.
For Purple.....Red and Blue.
For Pink.....White and Carmine.
For Light Green.....Yellow and Blue.
For Dark Green.....Blue and Yellow.
For Orange.....Yellow and Red.
For Cream.....White, Yellow and Red.
For Buff.....Yellow and a little Red.

Water colors will blend well on a damp surface so if you care to, you may moisten your print by washing it with a clean brush dipped in clear water. When the surface to tint is large, as a sky, a lawn, etc., a large brush should be used, and the color applied with a sweeping motion. Do not allow a surplus of color to stand in any corner, but blot out or work in with the rest of the tint. Successive washes with diluted colors will be found the most satisfactory, so do not charge your brush with too much liquid, especially for a first wash. Each successive application will strengthen the tint and the colors should blend harmoniously. There should be no streaking. Should there be a pond or stream of water in the foreground of your picture, apply the same colors used above, very lightly, over the reflections and a brilliant effect will be secured.

Where light clouds appear in the picture, wipe the light parts in your sky before they have dried, with a clean brush. This will produce the desired effect. Storm clouds may be shaded with light purple. (For light purple dilute a few drops of purple with water).

A path or roadway in the foreground may be washed in light brown, blending into a light yellow at the middle distance or distance.

Objects, such as rocks, old buildings, or fences, may be washed with a mixture of light brown and a touch of red.

Experience will soon teach you which are the best subjects and prints to color. There are in the market numerous grades of photographic paper, but many of them do not lend themselves to tinting. Their surface is too smooth, and the colors will be very hard to apply. The paper best suited to tinting must have a tooth. By tooth is meant an unevenness or roughness of surface.

The prints we are sending you for practice have been printed on a mat photographic paper. Rough paper will help the different tints, inasmuch as it will give them softness and smoothness. If you look closely at a water color you will find that the artist has selected a rough toothed paper on which to do his painting. Your tinted prints must have the softness of appearance of a water color. You may secure photographic paper from any responsible dealer.

The one important thing to bear in mind is not to use too much or too strong a color. Doing so will destroy the transparency of the colors and perhaps ruin your picture. Opaque colors are extremely handy for the touching up of prints already colored with transparent colors.

Moonlight scenes and reflections on water gain wonderfully by a touch of a little opaque color here and there, for it imparts a brilliancy to the print that no other medium will give. The colors furnished with your outfit are made out of pigments and chemicals that are fast to light and will be found satisfactory for any effect you may wish to get.

If you follow my instructions carefully, I know that you will experience no difficulty in securing the best results. By application, the next photograph you tint will be easier, and with the practice you will have gained your following tintings will show an improvement. "What is your best work?" was asked of Ward, the artist. "My next one," he replied.

The constant effort to improve on all our past efforts produces an attitude of mind that cannot help but succeed. Genius is made of such things. Whenever I find a member of my own organization who is constantly on the lookout to improve his work, who seeks to do everything better each time, I know that one is marked for advancement.

In your outfit are a group of small photographs. Tint these photographs as instructed and return them to me for correction.

When you have completed this lesson, you will be in a position to take up the tinting of photographs, and thus add to your present line. You may use photographs of local scenes, or if you wish, we will supply you with artistic photographs, ready to decorate.

I would say further that the photographs that you tint for sale should be framed so that they will be a complete art object.

Portrait Tinting With Oil

I have discussed at some length the subject of photo tinting in water colors. I will now say a few words about the tinting of photographs with oil colors so that if you ever care to try your hand at that you may do so. However, you need not work out any of the photographs enclosed in your outfit with oil colors. I am merely giving you these few pointers on tinting portraits with oil to help you in case you are anxious to attempt that work. This manner of tinting is relatively easy to master, inasmuch as this medium can be removed very easily with a clean piece of cotton, saturated with turpentine, should the effect produced be displeasing. The surface of the paper will not be injured in the least, and no matter how deep a color might be, it will not stain the paper if removed within a reasonable time.

The process of tinting with oil colors may be termed a process in soft tones, for the colors are applied so that they will blend softly and show no lines of demarcation.

Whether you use oil or water colors, you will note that the best results are obtained on a mat or rough paper.

The method of tinting is simple and the worker with only rudimentary knowledge of painting will be given access to the realm of color.

It must be remembered that in portraiture the most favored colors are those that blend in low, harmonious tones, and not those that are over-brilliant, or startling. As I pointed out in a previous paragraph, colors should never be used pure or raw, but always in tones and combinations. No gold leaf, bronze or silver should be used to represent jewelry, or silverware, as it cheapens your work, and gives it an unrealistic effect.

The outfit required is inexpensive and only a few colors are necessary. A small palette and a knife for mixing colors will do. A small piece of glass and a pocketknife would answer the purpose. For general work you may use the colors furnished in your outfit; chrome yellow, crimson, lake, ultramarine blue and zinc white. Others may be added as found necessary.

Some colors may be found a little thick, for washes must be transparent in order not to *hide any of the fine details shown on the print. A thick color is opaque and hides details.* Too thick colors can be thinned simply by the addition of a little linseed oil or turpentine.

As linseed oil dries very slowly it must be used sparingly. A drop or so is enough. Turpentine is easier for the amateur to handle.

To apply the paint, soft bristle or camel's hair brushes may be used, but a small wad of cotton at the end of a toothpick will prove very convenient. A large wad of cotton held betwen the thumb and forefinger will make a splendid "blender."

You will first apply the shade or tone wanted with the point of your brush, using very thin color, and going over it lightly with the cotton wad to gain smoothness.

If you desire to block out any portion of the photograph you may do so by covering it with opaque color. To make your colors opaque add white. You will tone them down by use of a clean cotton wad, but only where a bright spot is desired to brighten a dark shadow, should you have recourse to this. You may also use opaque color in obtaining cloud effects, but this medium should be used very sparingly.

For minute details use a very fine brush, or a small amount of cotton, wrapped around the point of a toothpick.

I want you to study the list of colors I am giving below, which will help you solve your problems in tinting photographs with oil colors.

Yellow (6) and blue (15) make green—with a touch of red (9) to warm the shade.

Blue (15) for sky is warmed with yellow.

Purple is composed of red (9) and blue (15).

Pink (17) is red (9) reduced with white (27).

Reds in shadows usually take a dark purplish tinge (24) produced by mixing a little blue (15) with strong colors.

Shadows are never black but show a tinge of blue on grass, rocks, foliage, sand and snow. Highlights on jewelry or polished furniture are obtained by a touch of white (27) with a trace of the local color.

Gold is a reddish yellow, obtained from yellow (6) and a trace of red (9).

Suggestions on Painting Faces

Cheeks must be carefully and delicately painted. Avoid glaring color, which gives tinted photographs a cheap appearance. The amount of color in cheeks should be governed by the age, character and complexion of the individual.

The cheeks of babies and young people should be tinted low and of adults near the temples.

Lips should be pink and blend softly into the flesh tones.

Eyebrows should be touched up thinly with color wanted.

Paint the hair with local color, and touch up shadows with blue (15) and a minute amount of red (9).

Shadowy flesh tones are washed over with blue (14), yellow (5) and red (8) to give them a grayish cast.

Blend over all to give the portrait softness. I will lay stress upon the necessity of using thin color to obtain the greatest transparency and obtain the best results.

You will mail all of the practice cards to me and I will point out to you the mistakes you may have made.

Gabriel André Petit

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